

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (currently amended) ~~An interface panel for a fluid-filled elastomeric bladder disposed in a vehicle seat for occupant weight estimation, said Occupant weight estimation apparatus for a vehicle seat comprising:~~

a fluid-filled elastomeric bladder disposed in said seat; and
an interface panel of non-uniform rigidity disposed adjacent to said elastomeric bladder for transferring occupant weight to said bladder, said interface panel having a non-uniform rigidity defined by multiple rigid regions of substantial rigidity separated joined by intervening flexible regions of insubstantial rigidity, where said intervening flexible regions deflect in response to occupant weight to permit differential movement and angulation of said rigid regions such that said multiple regions of substantial rigidity to effect to achieve regional transfer of said occupant weight to said bladder while protecting said bladder from puncture damage and limiting bladder sensitivity to irregularities of said seat.

2. (currently amended) An interface panel Occupant weight estimation apparatus according to Claim 1, comprising where the interface panel comprises:

a flexible base sheet of insubstantial rigidity; and
multiple rigid plates of substantial rigidity affixed to said base sheet.

3. (currently amended) An interface panel Occupant weight estimation apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein said base sheet is a fabric material.

4. (currently amended) An interface panel Occupant weight estimation apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein said multiple rigid plates exhibit different degrees of rigidity.

5. (currently amended) An interface panel Occupant weight estimation apparatus according to Claim 4, wherein said multiple plates have different thicknesses.

6. (currently amended) An interface panel Occupant weight estimation apparatus according to Claim 1, comprising where the interface panel comprises:
a unitary sheet of non-uniform thickness.

7. (currently amended) An interface panel Occupant weight estimation apparatus according to Claim 1, comprising where the interface panel comprises:
multiple rigid plates ~~of substantial rigidity~~ affixed to a surface of said seat that engages said fluid-filled bladder.

8. (currently amended) An interface panel Occupant weight estimation apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein said multiple rigid plates are affixed to a foam cushion of said seat by insert molding.